

Mr. NUNN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be given 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DAYTIME TALK SHOWS

Mr. NUNN. Mr. President, last month, I joined my colleagues, Senator LIEBERMAN and former Secretary William Bennett, who was the former Secretary of Education, at a news conference in which they were shining a spotlight on what I believe is the problem that for too long has been ignored by television executives, corporate advertisers, the news media, as well as the American people. The problem is the content of some of our television programming and the corrosive effect this programming is having on our culture. Nowhere is this cultural erosion or "cultural rot," in the words of Secretary Bennett, more evident than in the content of many of today's daytime talk shows.

The news media are finally beginning to report on these issues, even though many Americans have been voicing their concern for a long time. I know that I have been speaking out on these matters for a number of years, as have a number of my colleagues, and as have Americans from all walks of life and all parts of the country. The media has not been listening until recently, but they are listening now, and I think that is having a real effect.

I would not be speaking out today, or in the past, if I believed television was not important. It is very important.

According to the World Almanac for 1995, Americans watch approximately 16½ hours of television per week; teenagers watch about 12 hours per week. I think the number is higher than that, but that is what this says. Our children watch approximately 13 hours per week. For adults, this amounts to two full 8-hour working days of television viewing per week. For children and teenagers, this amounts to 2 extra days of "television school." For children, this is far more time than they devote to homework. The second most widely circulated magazine in America is TV Guide, a magazine about television. Billions and billions of dollars are spent on television advertising. We all know that market forces would not pour that kind of money into television if it did not have a powerful impact on the people watching it. All of these statistics point to the fact that television has a powerful and profound affect on all of our lives.

Given the tremendous impact of television on American culture, the content of our television programming is important. To illustrate this point, I refer my colleagues to the June 1992 edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association, which reported on a study that concluded there was a direct relationship between the level of violence on television and the growth of violent crime in our society. The

study—headed up by Dr. Brandon Centerwall, a Seattle, WA, psychiatrist—concludes: "The epidemiological evidence indicates that if, hypothetically, television technology had never been developed, there would today be 10,000 fewer homicides each year in the United States, 70,000 fewer rapes, and 700,000 fewer injurious assaults."

Neither I, nor Senator LIEBERMAN, nor former Secretary Bennett is talking about turning back our technological clock by 50 years. There are many good programs on television. There is much education on television in a positive sense. However, violent television programming is not a necessary part of television technology, and the logical conclusion from Dr. Centerwall's study, and numerous other such studies along this line, is that a reduction in the level of violence in television programming will, over the long term, lead to a reduction in violence in our society.

Nowhere is the content of television more depraved and more sensational, nowhere does television unapologetically appeal to people's most prurient interests and worst instincts than on daytime talk shows. These are shows that do not even pretend to excuse themselves under a disclaimer that they present fantasy or fiction. They pump up their ratings by portraying their contents as "real life." As a consequence, they demean and exploit real people. By implication, they tell their audiences that men, women, and children who have serious problems in life are an object of freak-show fascination. I doubt that many of the producers or sponsors of these shows will tell you that they are proud of what they do. If you asked them why they do it, in private, and if they were honest, I imagine they would confess they do it purely for money.

During the Lieberman-Bennett press conference last month, which I joined, some clips from these shows were shown to illustrate our point that much of this programming has gone far beyond the pale, and that we as citizens, as leaders, and as consumers should let television executives know and should let companies who advertise know that we believe it is unacceptable for those shows to continue to cultivate the seeds of cultural and moral decline in our Nation.

In subsequent responses to these comments we made at the news conference, and in an effort to defend this medium, some defenders of daytime talk shows suggested that we were out of line by speaking out against the content of these shows. They even raised the question of the first amendment. Some suggested that daytime talk shows were the victims of broad generalizations, perhaps suggesting that we found a few sensationalized, anomalous episodes and were holding those up as the standard daytime talk show fare.

To follow up on this issue, one member of my staff voluntarily conducted an unscientific survey of the topics of daytime talk shows. Every hour or so, he would scan the television on his desk and see what the day's topics were for the daytime talk shows. The results added to the concern that I already had.

The first day, one show was called, "Stop Pretending To Be a Girl" and featured young boys whose parents were upset that their sons dressed and acted like a girl. Another show offered a show entitled "Boys Who Only Have Sex With Virgins." Yet another show featured a girl dumping her boyfriend on national television and asking her new "significant other," another girl, to commit to her.

Mr. President, I thought that surely the next day's shows would pale in comparison to these. I was wrong. Subsequent days' reviews of these shows found titles such as "One-night Stand Reunions." Another show was entitled "I'm Ready To Have Sex With You Now." And another show was called, "I Cheat and I'm Proud of It." One show featured a woman who chose to tell her fiancé on national television that she cheated on him with her sister's boyfriend and that she lied to him about a miscarriage which was actually an abortion. Another show reunited pornographic stars, strippers, and transvestites with their past lovers. Perhaps the most appropriately titled show of all was the one entitled "You Look Like a Freak."

Quoting again from Dr. Centerwall, babies "are born with an instinctive capacity and desire to imitate adult human behavior." Continuing the quote, "It is a most useful instinct, for the developing child must learn and master a vast repertoire of behavior in short order." The problem is that children do not possess an instinct for gauging a priori whether a behavior ought to be imitated.

Therein, Mr. President, lies the problem. We should not hesitate to speak out against things we feel are harmful to our children and to our society. The people that produce television and radio and newspapers have a first amendment right; no doubt about that. We all hold it sacred. But we also have a constitutional guarantee of free speech as citizens. We do not have to be Senators to have that right. Citizens have that right in America. While our guarantee under the first amendment allows programs such as these to exist, it also allows them to be criticized. Further, it allows us to encourage the corporations and businesses whose advertising dollars make these broadcasts possible to rethink their sponsorship. That is what I have been doing for at least the last 5 years. If they do not rethink their sponsorship of these programs, the first amendment and our marketplace allows us, as consumers, to no longer support the products of the corporations that fund programs

that we find offensive. That is our right as citizens.

I believe that corporate executives need to pay attention to what their dollars are sponsoring, and I believe they need to rethink whether or not they want their firms associated with many of these shows. Indeed, the point is not whether such shows can be shown on television. They can be. We know that. The question is whether such shows should be on television. For too long, this second question has been ignored.

It appears that this question may finally be getting the attention it deserves. In recent days, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Times, and NBC News have reported that companies, including Procter & Gamble, the Nation's largest television advertiser, are withdrawing their advertising support from some daytime talk shows because they do not meet company standards of quality and decency.

Mr. President, this is precisely the kind of corporate effort that can have a significant impact on the content of television programming. All of this is run by money, and if the money starts shifting, believe me, there will be a response. I applaud Procter & Gamble officials, and those in other companies, who are beginning to realize—too slowly in my view, but finally—that they have an obligation beyond getting rating points. They have a responsibility as citizens for the kind of America we live in and how we raise our children.

As a final note, the heavy sexual content in soap operas, the excessive gratuitous violence, profanity, and sex in prime time shows and, most importantly, the lack of parental supervision should not escape this debate over television. We all have our responsibilities. These are aspects of television that are just as important as the content of the daytime talk shows.

Mr. President, I have spoken out before against these negative aspects and I will have more to say in the months ahead.

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, we are in morning business now and we can for a specific length of time, is that the way we are proceeding?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 10 minutes.

THE BALANCED BUDGET

Mr. CHAFEE. I thank the Chair. I want to return to the balanced budget amendment discussions that we have had here previously. I listened to some of the discourse that took place here. I thought there was a lot of common sense here on the floor.

The Senator from Georgia spoke, the Senator from Nevada, the two Senators from Nebraska and others. I thought what was said here gives us ground for arriving at a very reasonable compromise in the days ahead.

Clearly, the President will veto the balanced budget amendment. We all accept that. The question is, where do we

go from here? Mr. President, I want to continue on the discussion that took place here previously.

First of all, it seems to me to ask for the balanced budget in 7 years is a reasonable request. I think the Republicans and indeed all of us have a sound basis for saying, "Look, 7 years is not too early to balance this budget." So, I think it is quite proper for the Republicans to hang firm on that particular position. I heard the Senator from Georgia say that 7 years is reasonable.

What about the other side? I heard discussion on the tax cut. I think it is perfectly reasonable for others to say we have to back off that tax cut. Now, should we back off to zero tax cut? Perhaps that is going too far. Perhaps we could settle on something in the neighborhood of what the President himself has discussed. As I recall, that was something in the area of \$107 billion, if I am not mistaken.

I am not in favor of the tax cut, period, never have been. Nonetheless, there are those, particularly in the other body, who feel very, very strongly about having a tax cut. So, perhaps a suitable compromise would be to back off to the area of the vicinity where the President himself discussed a tax cut.

What about some of the other areas? I certainly hope that those who have discussed Medicare here will recognize that the 31.5 percent premium that we are now requiring for part B is a fair requirement, and it seems to me those who are talking about going down to 25 percent must recognize that that has to be picked up by the general treasury. That is where the money comes from.

All of us have to use some common sense and reasonableness here, but I have great difficulty understanding those who would want to take the premium, in effect, have it dropped—have those who are receiving the benefits of Medicare, an entitlement that goes right across the board to everybody, rich or poor—to say that they are going to pay less for their part B premium. So I hope that we would agree on the 31.5 percent.

Now, I have not heard a dissenting voice that we should not go to the affluence testing. We can argue about that—whether it should be \$50,000 for the individual and \$100,000 for the married couple and phasing out—we can argue over that. Clearly, going to affluence testing makes a lot of sense.

Now, the CPI. I hope we will do the recomputation of the CPI. That is perfectly fair. If we are paying too much, we ought to recognize it.

Another area that I think the Republicans should give ground on is on the Medicaid and the reductions that are provided in that—reductions from rate of growth, yes; but I have grave concerns over whether in the Medicaid we are keeping a suitable safety net for those lower income individuals in our society.

Yes, we are protecting children up through the age of 12 at 100 percent of

poverty or less. But is that enough? As you know, now it goes up every year so that we cover those at the age of 13, 14, and so forth up to the age of 18 by the year 2002.

I, personally, would hope we would go higher than the current category, which as I said is up to the age of 13 at 100 percent of poverty or less.

Mr. President, I think we have the ground here, from the discussions I have heard on the floor, for arriving at a reasonable compromise. To get any compromise, people have got to go in with a certain amount of flexibility.

If the Republicans say "Not a nickel reduction in the tax cut that we have provided," or if the Democrats say "Nothing doing on the year 2002; nothing doing there," if each of us get dug in, we will not get anywhere.

I think we have the basis here for a reasonable compromise. I hope the administration and the negotiators from the House and the Senate would pay attention to the suggestions made here on the floor today.

Mr. KERRY. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. CHAFEE. I am happy to yield to the Senator.

Mr. KERRY. I am delighted to hear our friend on the other side of the aisle talk common sense, which seems to have been lacking here in much of the dialog over the last days. Many of us over here feel very strongly that the issue of a tax cut in the face of this deficit is a morality question, but I think the Senator from Rhode Island has appropriately suggested, we all need some flexibility.

I ask the Senator, then, does he not think, if there ought to be some tax cut, if that is part of the gospel here, does the Senator not agree that at least that tax cut ought to be targeted toward those Americans who can most benefit from it and also most need it?

Mr. CHAFEE. There is no question that that is right.

I must say as we start on this, if I could use a word of caution, I hope that we would avoid the word "morality" here, that one side is moral and the other side is immoral. I do not want to pursue this too far, but I think all of us have to watch our rhetoric—me, us on this side, all of us in this Chamber—if we are going to arrive at a satisfactory resolution of these very difficult problems.

The answer to the question, have a tax cut to help those who most need it—sure. Of course, we recognize those who most need it are not paying much of a tax to start with, so how much a reduction would be of assistance to those individuals, I do not know.

I think we also have to recognize—as I said before, I am not for the tax cut. But there are those who feel very, very deeply about it, particularly in the other body. That does not mean that we cannot back off from the size of the tax cut that was proposed.

If the Senator from Massachusetts has some suggestions on how we could reduce the tax cut and make it directed